

REMARKS

I. Status of the Application

At the time of the Action, Claims 1-9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18-24, 26-28, 30, 32, 33, 35-37 and 41-50 were pending. Claims 1-9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18-22, 33, 35-37 and 46-49 are allowed. Claims 23, 24, 26-28, 30, 32 and 50 were rejected under Section 102(b). Claims 27 and 28 have been canceled above, their subject matter having been incorporated into Claim 23.

The Section 102(b) rejections are addressed below.

II. The Section 102(b) Rejections

A. Rejection of Claim 23 and Claims Dependent Thereon

The Action rejects Claims 23, 24, 26, 30 and 32 under Section 102(b) based on U.S. Patent No. 2,374,840 to Schonitzer (Schonitzer). The Action characterizes Schonitzer as disclosing a rotary unit as claimed, in particular one that has at least four fingers. Figures 2, 3 and 8 of Schonitzer are set forth below.

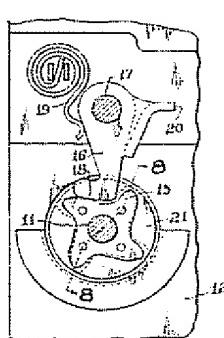


FIG. 2

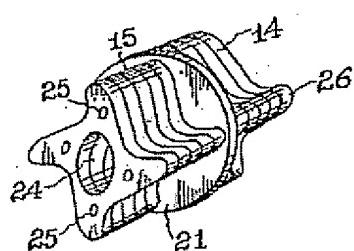


FIG. 3

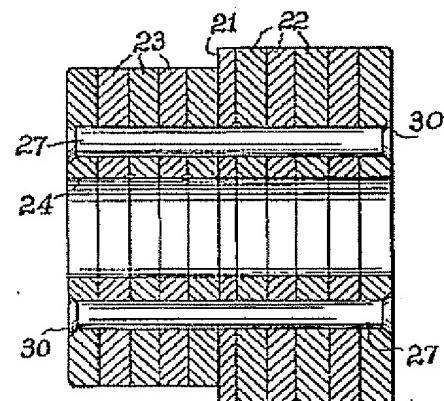
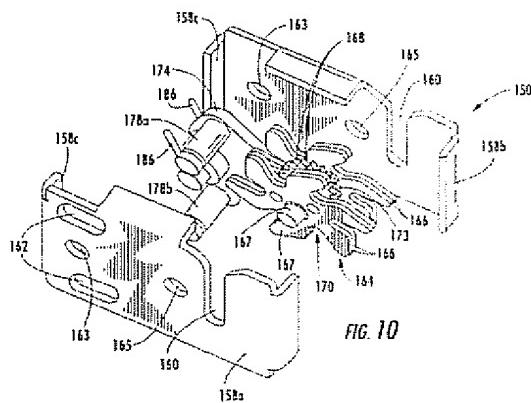


FIG. 8

As can be seen in these figures, the dog 16 identified in the Action as the "pawl member" engages the end portion 14 of the rotary bolt 10. The end portions 15 of the Schonitzer device are separated from the end portions 14 by a disk 21.

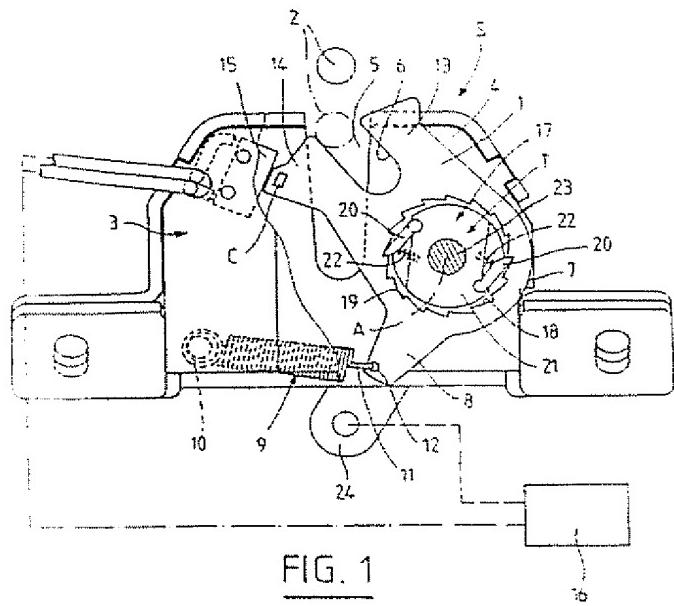
In contrast, amended Claim 23 now recites that the rotary member is formed of multiple layers, wherein outer layers form the plurality of fingers and inner layers that are sandwiched by outer layers form the engagement portion. This configuration is exemplified by Figure 10 of the specification (shown below), which illustrates the engagement portion as a gear with teeth 173 and fingers 170.



It is clear that the Schonitzer device does not have outer layers that form fingers that sandwich inner layers that form an engagement portion. As such, Schonitzer cannot anticipate the subject matter of Claim 23, and Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

B. Rejection of Claim 50

Claim 50 stands rejected under Section 102(b) based on U.S. Patent No. 4,927,196 to Girard et al. (Girard). In Applicants' previous response, Applicants argued that the bolt 1 of Girard is not able to rotate freely about the axis A in either rotative direction (see Figure 1 of Girard below).



The Action acknowledges this argument, but states that "when considering only one pawl, the claim limitations are structurally met by Girard, and the device is capable of functioning in the manner claimed." Based on this conclusion, the Action maintains the rejection.

Applicants disagree with the position taken in the Action. As Applicants noted in Applicants' previous response, the bolt 1 of Girard is not able to rotate freely about the axis A in either rotative direction. Instead, it can be seen that the interaction between the pawls 20 and the notches 19 prevents any rotation of the bolt 1 in a counterclockwise direction (from the vantage point of Figure 1 of Girard), and the presence of both the spring 9 and the upper wall of the base 3 prevents the bolt 1 from rotating freely (i.e., 360° rotation) in a counterclockwise direction. As such, the Girard lock does not meet the recitation in Claim 50 that the engagement portion of the pawl member "permit free rotation of the rotary member in a second rotative direction that is opposite the first rotative direction."

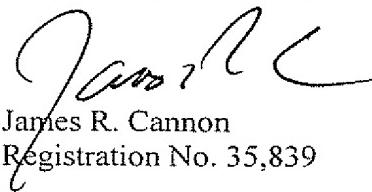
If, as the Action states, only one pawl were present, the bolt would still not freely rotate in the counterclockwise direction. Both pawls are present to prevent counterclockwise rotation of the bolt 1; thus, removing one of the pawls as suggested by the Action would not enable the bolt 1 to rotate freely in the counterclockwise direction. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Girard fails to anticipate the subject matter of Claim 50, and respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

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III. Conclusion

Inasmuch as the points and concerns raised in the Official Action have been addressed in full, Applicants respectfully request that this application is in condition to pass to issue, which action is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner have any matters of outstanding resolution, he is encouraged to telephone the undersigned at 919-854-1400 for expeditious handling.

Respectfully submitted,


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CERTIFICATION OF TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being transmitted via the Office electronic filing system in accordance with § 1.6(a)(4) to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on November 20, 2007.

Signature: Joyce Pappi
